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# Officer Response to Calls

## **308.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

This policy provides for the safe and appropriate response to all emergency and non-emergency situations whether dispatched or self-initiated (Wis. Stat. § 346.03(6)).

## **308.2 RESPONSE TO CALLS**

Officers responding to any call shall proceed immediately. Officers responding to an emergency as an emergency response shall continuously operate emergency lighting equipment and shall sound the siren as reasonably necessary (Wis. Stat. § 346.03).

Responding with emergency lights and siren does not relieve the operator of an authorized emergency vehicle of the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons and property and does not protect the driver from the consequences of his/her reckless disregard for the safety of others. The use of any other warning equipment without emergency lights and siren does not generally provide an exemption from the Wisconsin motor vehicle laws (Wis. Stat. § 346.03(5)).

Officers should only respond to a call as an emergency response when so dispatched or when circumstances reasonably indicate an emergency response is required. Officers not responding as an emergency response shall observe all traffic laws and proceed without the use of emergency lights and siren.

## **308.3 REQUESTING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE**

Requests for emergency assistance should be limited to those situations where the involved personnel reasonably believe that there is an imminent threat to the safety of officers, or assistance is needed to prevent imminent serious harm to a citizen. In any event, where a situation has stabilized and emergency response is not required, the requesting officers shall immediately notify the Dispatch Center.

### **308.3.1 NUMBER OF UNITS PARTICIPATING**

Normally, only those units reasonably necessary should respond to a call with an emergency response. The on-duty Sergeant should monitor all emergency responses and reduce or enhance the response as warranted.

## **308.4 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RESPONDING OFFICER**

Officers shall exercise sound judgment and care with due regard for life and property when responding to an emergency call. Officers shall reduce speed at all street intersections to such a degree that they shall have complete control of the vehicle.

During a call involving an emergency response, after giving a visual and audible siren or exhaust whistle, officers may (Wis. Stat. § 346.03):

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- (a) Disregard regulations governing stopping, parking or standing when using a red or red and blue flashing, oscillating or rotating light.
- (b) Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation.
- (c) Exceed any speed limits provided this does not endanger life or property.
- (d) Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions.

The decision to continue as an emergency response is at the discretion of the officer. If, in the officer's judgment, the roadway conditions or traffic congestion does not permit such a response without unreasonable risk, the officer may elect to respond to the call without the use of red lights and siren at the legal speed limit. In such an event, the officer should immediately notify the Dispatch Center. An officer shall also discontinue an emergency response when directed by a supervisor.

Upon determining that an emergency response is appropriate, an officer may give the location from which he/she is responding.

The first officer arriving at an emergency response scene should determine whether to increase or reduce the level of the response and notify the Dispatch Center of their determination. Any subsequent change in the appropriate response level should be communicated to the Dispatch Center by the officer in charge of the scene unless a supervisor assumes this responsibility.

#### 308.4.1 EMERGENCY RESPONSE SPECIAL CONDITIONS

While performing certain emergency response tasks, the use of emergency lights or sirens may increase the danger to the responding officers or the public. In the following circumstances, officers may exceed the speed limit without giving a visual and audible signal if (Wis. Stat. § 346.03(4)):

- (a) The officer is obtaining evidence of a speed violation.
- (b) The officer is responding to a call which the officer reasonably believes involves a felony in progress and the officer reasonably believes that knowledge of the officer's presence may:
  - 1. Endanger the safety of a victim or other person, or
  - 2. Cause the suspected violator to evade apprehension, or
  - 3. Cause the suspected violator to destroy evidence of a suspected felony or may otherwise result in the loss of evidence of a suspected felony, or
  - 4. Cause the suspected violator to cease the commission of a suspected felony before the officer obtains sufficient evidence to establish grounds for arrest.

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Any emergency response without the use of emergency lights and siren shall be conducted with due regard for the safety of the public and property and the recognition that such a response may not provide an exemption from the vehicle laws (Wis. Stat. § 346.03(5)).

Any emergency response without the use of lights or siren shall cease if the circumstances no longer warrant such a response.

#### **308.5 SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES**

Upon being notified that an emergency response has been initiated, the on-duty Sergeant shall verify the following:

- (a) The proper response has been initiated.
- (b) No more than those units reasonably necessary under the circumstances are involved in the response.
- (c) Affected outside jurisdictions are being notified as practicable.

The field supervisor shall, whenever practicable, monitor the response until it has been stabilized or terminated, and assert control by directing units into or out of the response if necessary. If, in the supervisor's judgment, the circumstances require additional units to be assigned an emergency response, the supervisor may do so.

It is the supervisor's responsibility to terminate an emergency response that, in his/her judgment, is inappropriate due to the circumstances.

When making the decision to authorize an emergency response, the on-duty Sergeant should consider the following:

- The type of call or crime involved
- The necessity of a timely response
- Traffic and roadway conditions
- The location of the responding units

#### **308.6 FAILURE OF EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT**

If the emergency equipment on the vehicle should fail to operate, the officer must terminate the emergency response and continue accordingly.

The officer shall notify the Sergeant and the Dispatch Center of the equipment failure so that another unit may be assigned to the emergency response.